

A **bias** is a tendency, inclination, or prejudice toward or against something or someone.*



Implicit or unconscious bias

We categorise people and assign **positive or negative value** to those categories (*Tajfel & Turner, 1979*).

Biases become **fixed in our thought processes** and are accessed **automatically and unconsciously** (*Bodenhausen and McCrae, 1998*).

Biases develop from and are sustained through our **culture** and our **experiences**.



Bias is human

Everyone is biased and tends to have a **bias blind spot**.

We see biases much better in others than in ourselves
(*Pronin et al., 2002*).

Biases are most easily triggered under **cognitive or emotional load, tiredness or hunger**.



Some types of biases

- ✓ **Affinity bias**
- ✓ **Attribution bias**
- ✓ **Confirmation bias**
- ✓ **Conformity bias**
- ✓ **Halo and horns effects**



Affinity bias

Inclination to prefer people that are similar to oneself or have something in common with oneself or someone one likes.

Attribution bias

A self-serving tendency to attribute **one's successes** to one's intelligence and personality, but **one's failures** to situational and external factors, or **other's successes** to situational and external factors.



Confirmation bias

Once one has an opinion, one seeks out information to confirm the opinion and **unconsciously ignores evidence to the contrary.**

Conformity bias

Caused by **peer group pressure**.

An individual who feels most of the group leaning towards or away from a certain position may tend to **go along with what the group thinks rather than voice their own opinion.**



Halo and horns effects

If one **likes one characteristic** of an individual, one may have a **more positive view of their other characteristics.**



If one **does not like one characteristic** of an individual, one may have a **more negative view of their other characteristics.**

Some examples of bias in evaluations

- ✓ **Gender**
- ✓ **Expertise and ‘airtime’**
- ✓ **Authors’ names**
- ✓ **Names and ethnicity**

Gender bias in evaluations

Independence

“The **role and independence** of women in strong research teams was more often questioned and in a way that did not apply to men to the same extent.”

Collaboration and private relationships

“**Private relationships with co-applicants** named in the application were more often taken up for discussion **when a woman applied for a grant**, compared with when a man did.”

Descriptions

“**For men** put forward to receive funding, recurrent descriptions were ‘**well-known**’, ‘**respected**’, and ‘**established**’ (...). Instead, **for women** terms like ‘**good**’/‘**strong**’/‘**solid track record**’ and ‘**high novelty**’ were more frequent.”

Expertise and “airtime”

When a panel member is recognised as the expert, 62% of the time their opinion will be followed by the group (*Baumann and Bonner, 2004*).

When the group does not recognise the expert, they **listen to the most extroverted person.**



Authors' names

Evidence of bias in peer review:

Recommendation to reject	
Prominent researcher	23%
Anonymised	48%
Little-known author	65%

Huber, J. et al., 2022, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-03256-9>

Name and ethnicity

Evidence of over 12,000 job applications for leadership positions in Australia, with **identical resumes** for applicants with English or non-English names:

Origin of name	Positive response
English	26.8%
Non-English	11.3%

Adamovic, M. and Leibbrandt, A., 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2022.101655>



Panel meeting: reduce bias triggers

1. Know your own unconscious biases; test yourself*
2. Base your evaluations on clear criteria and be accountable for your opinions
3. Build in challenge and non-conformism (e.g., a ‘Devil’s Advocate’)
4. Pay attention to your “airtime” and fair distribution among panel members
5. Make sure everyone has the opportunity to contribute

* <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>



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